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for

January, 1944

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The Gramophone Shop, Inc.

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Vol. VII

Record Supplement for January, 1944

No. 1

BACH (JOHANN SEBASTIAN)

BACH: Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue & Six Little Preludes. Wanda Landowska (harpsichord). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. G-DB4993/4; price \$5.24.

The VICTOR pressing of Wanda Landowska's masterly performance of the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue* (in VM-323) has been discontinued for reasons clear only to VICTOR. We are fortunate in having again a small supply of the HMV pressing. To hear these showers of golden sound (which Virgil Thomson aptly compared to the god's visit to Danae) from the flawless HMV surfaces is to hear the best playing possible of truly great music at its optimum.

BAX (SIR ARNOLD TREVOR)

BAX: Overture to a Picaresque Comedy. London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Hamilton Harty. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. C-LX394; price \$2.10.

The American COLUMBIA repressing (C-68389D) having been cut from the catalogue, we have imported a small supply of the original English COLUMBIA recording of Bax' attractive *Overture to a Picaresque Comedy*. The apt title fully discusses the character and weight of the music, which is livelier and more deft than Bax' customary Celticizing. The performance of the London Philharmonic under Harty still displays its virtues in a recording not yet grown old.

BEETHOVEN (LUDWIG VAN)

BEETHOVEN: Egmont—Overture, Opus 34. NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. G-DB5705; price \$2.62.

For comment, see review of *Leonora Overture No. 3*, below.

BEETHOVEN: *Leonora Overture No. 3*, Opus 72A. NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. G-DB5703/4; price \$5.24.

Arturo Toscanini may be—as his most intense admirers state—the greatest of recording conductors. But he has not been the most fortunate or the wisest. Time and again, his dynamic and towering performances have been recorded in acoustically dead studios, punctuated by coughs, monitored badly. Ill fortune, up to a point. But lack of wisdom beyond that point. He is reported to have refused, at last, his permission for the release of numerous recordings now in the VICTOR "iceboxes." It does his enduring fame no good to have—for example—his recording of the Beethoven *Fifth Symphony* constantly misrepresenting his performance. But when no better Toscanini recording is forthcoming, it is useful, purely for the record, to have some Toscanini recording for comparison. For this reason, the GRAMOPHONE SHOP has imported from England a limited supply of the HMV pressings of his readings of *Egmont* and *Leonora No. 3*, which, though made by

the NBC Symphony Orchestra, have never been released domestically by VICTOR. We list them here with the bare statement that the tempos and as much of the dynamics as can be trusted are unmistakably those of Toscanini. But the recording—not the surfaces, which are prime—is exceedingly bad. *Caveat emptor!*

BEETHOVEN: Thirty-Two Variations, C minor & Bagatelles, Opus 119—Nos. 1 & 11. Denis Matthews (piano). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. C-DX1060/1; price \$4.20.

Omitted from the Schnabel "Sonata Society" sets, the *Thirty-Two Variations* in C minor have been available, until recently, on V-1689/90, as played by Vladimir Horowitz. VICTOR having discontinued the Horowitz version, no English or American recording whatever exists to challenge the present Denis Matthews version. Fortunately, Mr. Matthews is equipped intellectually, musically, and technically to do the *Variations* complete justice. Not that he could not do justice to greater Beethoven, to which category these do not belong. He plays with the sort of absolutely authoritative assurance that relaxes the listener, enabling him really to listen. The piano tone was well caught by English COLUMBIA's engineers; the surfaces are blameless. Altogether, so long as one does not expect the great Beethoven, C-DX1060 and 1 are a real satisfaction. The second of the two *Bagatelles* on the odd fourth side is Beethoven in a mood of puissant charm, a mood Denis Matthews purveys to perfection.

BEETHOVEN: Der Wachtelschlag & Ich liebe dich & Das Geheimnis. Karl Erb (tenor) and Bruno Seidler-Winkler (piano). 12" imported record No. G-DB4677; price \$2.62.

It is true that the song was too small a space for the full development of Beethoven's genius. He cannot be placed by the side of Schubert, Schumann, Wolf, Brahms, and Strauss as a song composer. Yet there are a few of his lieder that remain fresh and attractive or fresh and convincing. Three of them are lovingly sung on this record by Karl Erb, the possessor of a nicely schooled high tenor voice. The texts are by now obscure poets, but the music is, for the most part, unmistakable Beethoven. Erb's accompaniments are in the very capable hands of Bruno Seidler-Winkler, perhaps better

known as a conductor. The result is an out-of-the-ordinary vocal record of quality.

BRAHMS (JOHANNES)

BRAHMS: Intermezzo, Opus 117, No. 1, Intermezzo, Opus 119, No. 3, Capriccio, Opus 116, No. 7. Myra Hess (piano). 12" imported record No. G-C3226; price \$2.10.

A happier combination than the short solo piano pieces of Brahms and the pianism of Myra Hess is difficult to name. When the recording is beyond criticism and contains three pieces of which two have quite escaped the hackneying hand of encore-givers, there is reason for cheering. In fact, the performance here recorded of the magnificent *Capriccio*, Opus 116, No. 7, must be ranked near the top of piano recordings in general. It has sometimes in the past been possible to think of Myra Hess as, however efficient technically, a kind of inspired amateur, so uneven have her performances been. Her latest English recordings quite belie that epithet, for now she has learned how to be always at her best. This record presents the last great golden glimmering of nineteenth-century romanticism at its most persuasive and intense. It is one that every admirer of Brahms and of robust and sensitive piano playing should hear.

BRITTEN (BENJAMIN)

BRITTEN: Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo. Peter Pears (tenor) and Benjamin Britten (piano). One 12" and one 10" imported record (4 sides) Nos. G-B9302 and G-C3312; price \$3.67.

Benjamin Britten is, at thirty, one of the most interesting of English composers. Having studied with Frank Bridge, Arthur Benjamin, and John Ireland, he is superbly trained: no technical gambit baffles him. He has an original and wayward mind: his next move, at times his next measure, is unpredictable. He is serious in the most admirable sense of that much misused word. He has, for the past ten years, composed not a little music

of which the term *avant-garde* might be used derogatorily, which fact is one sign of life. Nothing in his past, however, could quite have prepared his warmest admirers for the totally unexpected splendors of his *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*.

The sonnets chosen by Britten are numbers 16, 24, 30, 31, 32, 38, and 55. He had the good grace and the linguistic sensitivity to set them in their original Italian. Unwary ears, antimodern ears, lazy ears will perhaps find them—at first, certainly—unmelodic and brutal. They are nevertheless richly melodic and exceedingly beautiful. The accompaniments are as important and as successful in their way as Schumann's, and like Schumann's should perhaps be called equal partners rather than accompaniments. To listen to the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* several times with open and sympathetic ears and an open and sympathetic mind is to recognize them as a major accomplishment.

Peter Pears (whose artistry Maggie Teyte is known to hold in high esteem) is young, fresh, and imperfect—but pervasively and persuasively artistic. His voice has a markedly individualistic timbre, and he sings Britten's songs as though he had composed them himself. It is not possible to print the Italian texts with English translations here, but it will be worth anyone's while to know the meaning of what Mr. Pears is singing. For there can be little doubt that part of the future of music is in the capable hands of Benjamin Britten.

CAPLET: *Danse des petits nègres*, see **DEBUSSY:** *Sonata for cello and piano*.

CHOPIN (FREDERIC-FRANCOIS)

CHOPIN: *Barcarolle, F sharp, Opus 60*. Louis Kentner (piano). 12" imported record (2 sides) No. C-DX1112; price \$2.10.

C-71026D is one of Walter Gieseking's few recording failures. And his lack of sympathy with Chopin leaves the American record-buyer with importation as his only method of obtaining a satisfactory *Barcarolle*. Three recorded versions now intermittently available have important virtues: Cortot's (G-DB2030), Moiseiwitch's (G-C3229), and Kentner's. Cortot's must be a decade old, but still holds pre-eminence because of his poetic insight into the nature of Chopin's style. Moiseiwitch's is refreshingly levelheaded and straightforward, an ad-

mirable job of clean piano playing. Kentner's is virtuosic, like most of his playing, not insentitively so, but nevertheless on the side of display. Granted its premises and aims, it is first class, and it has been superbly recorded. It would be idle to complain of unnecessary duplication in the face of three recordings each with an admirable legitimate character of its own.

DEBUSSY (CLAUDE ACHILLE)

DEBUSSY: *Sonata for cello and piano & CAPLET: Danse des petits nègres*. Maurice Maréchal (cello) & Robert Casadesus (piano). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. C-LFX85/6; price \$4.20.

We have been fortunate enough to obtain a small supply of the only recording of Debussy's *Sonata* for cello and piano (1915). Composed at about the same time as the *Trio-Sonata* for flute, harp, and viola, and just before the *Sonata* for violin and piano, this is Debussy at his most maturely classical, if not at his most burgeoning and creative. Some say that his individual manner has here degenerated into mannerism, while others find him here purged of impressionistic weakness and sentimental Massenetism. That the music is exceedingly beautiful seems an easy judgment to accept. MM. Maréchal and Casadesus play it in full sympathy with and comprehension of its style and manner. They were recorded well for the era of this recording—only today does the result begin to show lack of the latest mechanical developments. Excellent surfaces go some distance toward compensating for a certain want of rounded depth in the recording. Here is an extraordinary piece of music beautifully played. The odd fourth side is given over to a piece of lively fluff by André Caplet.

ELGAR: *Serious Doll*, see **FIELD:** *A John Field Suite*.

FIELD (JOHN)

FIELD: *A John Field Suite* (arr. by Sir Hamilton Harty) & **ELGAR:** *Serious Doll*. Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Malcolm Sargent. Three 12" imported records (6 sides) Nos. C-DX1118/20; price \$6.30.

John Field was an Irish composer and pianist, born in Dublin in 1782, who died in Moscow in 1837. A pupil of Muzio Clementi, he is credited with having given Glinka a little of the little professional training the Russian ever had, with having first attached the word *nocturne* to the type of piano composition Chopin was to use it for, and with having been an extraordinary pianist. The present suite, arranged and orchestrated by Sir Hamilton Harty, is made up of four movements: *Polka*, *Nocturne*, *Slow Waltz* ("Remembrance"), and *Rondo* ("Midi"). It is fragile and gay for the most part, intermittently nostalgic, and always very like a light ballet score, perhaps apt to one of those stories in which dolls come to life or a little boy dreams the whole tale. Dr. Malcolm Sargent has always seemed, to this reviewer, a little on the ponderous side for light music, but he sets the Liverpool Philharmonic to spinning with almost the requisite brilliance. The recording is notably round and clear. The surfaces are of English COLUMBIA's standard excellence. Some day, it may be, we shall have a recording of the Field Concerto that Betty Humby and Sir Thomas Beecham let us enjoy a few years back. The odd sixth side of the present set contains a negligible trifle by Sir Edward Elgar.

GRIEG (EDVARD HAGERUP)

GRIEG: Ballade, G minor, Opus 24. Eileen Joyce (piano). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. C-DX1116/7; price \$4.20.

In the July, 1943, issue of this SUPPLEMENT, we reviewed the BOST recording (BA-6) of the Grieg *Ballade*, played by Stell Andersen, and remarked that it "easily supersedes the only earlier recording of the *Ballade*, a now superannuated version by Leopold Godowsky, apparently still available on English COLUMBIA (C-LX9/10)." We must now report that the other centennial recording of the *Ballade*, that by Eileen Joyce, just arrived from England, supersedes BA-6 with equal ease. It is, here, not so much a question of Miss Joyce's unquestionable superiority over Miss Andersen in warmth and imagination as it is of superb recording over mechanical treatment that is merely adequate most of the time, and not always even that. Eileen Joyce's stature, as measured by her recordings, has grown until she must be placed among today's foremost pianists. To hear a recording of Grieg's most appreciable piano composition, one must hear hers, on C-DX1116/7.

HANDEL (GEORGE FRIDERIC)

HANDEL: Samson—Let the bright seraphim. Isobel Baillie (soprano), Arthur Lockwood (trumpet), with the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Warwick Braithwaite. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. C-DX1113; price \$2.10.

Fixed in His everlasting seat, Total eclipse, and Let the bright seraphim are three of the high points of *Samson*, one of the several Handelian masterpieces of the early 1740's that choral conductors go on ignoring in favor of second-rate repetitions of *Messiah*. Hearing Isobel Baillie's superb rendition of this moving, light-shot paean, one can only wonder, one time more, why we should not hear six or eight of Handel's English masterpieces as often, say, as Beethoven's nine. With the vital support of the Hallé Orchestra under Braithwaite, and with Arthur Lockwood's thrilling golden trumpet pitted against her, Miss Baillie proves—to our great benefit—that the major art of oratorio singing is not dead in the England of World War II. Those who know their Handel well will hear C-DX1113 at once. More important, it may be heard by the many who have been forced to judge Bach's great peer and contemporary as the composer of a largo, something called "The Harmonious Blacksmith," and an annual duty called *Messiah*. Such performances as this can go a long way toward re-establishing one of the mightiest of the musical great in his rightful place. Recording and surface are beyond criticism.

HOLBROOKE (JOSEPH)

HOLBROOKE: Quintet, G, Opus 27, No. 2. Reginald Kell (clarinet) & Willoughby String Quartet. Three 12" imported records (6 sides) Nos. C-LX814/6; price \$6.30.

No one who has read Sir Thomas Beecham's *A Mingled Chime* is likely soon to forget his truly funny description of a performance, complete with lantern slides and a sarrusophone, of the music Joseph Holbrooke wrote to Herbert Trench's *Apollo and the Seaman*. It would be unfair to Holbrooke, however, to remember nothing else about him. For he is a composer of real, if not instantaneously charming, merit, somewhat older than Bax and somewhat younger than Vaughan Williams. He was for years engaged on what appeared to be a

transposition into musical terms of the collected works of Poe. Among the results was the present *Quintet*, related to the poem *Ligeia*, composed in 1910. If it seemed modern three decades ago, it now begins to sound comfortably old fashioned, full of melody as a plum pudding is of plum, and very eclectic indeed. It is expertly composed for string quartet, and makes legitimate if unusual demands on a hard-worked clarinetist. Its three movements may be judged as expressions of a real, not very deep, but imaginative musical impulse. The Willoughby String Quartet (Louis Willoughby, Kenneth Sekaping, Aubrey Appleton, and Vivian Joseph) performs its role admirably, and the artistry of Reginald Kell is certain. Those who find charm in the out-of-the-way when it *has* charm will find it here: no one will run for the nearest exit or throw his hat toward the chandelier. The recording, though not of last year's vintage, is admirably accurate. The surfaces bring out all they contain.

LEHAR (FRANZ)

LEHAR: Friederike—O Mädchen, mein Mädchen & Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein steh'n. Richard Tauber (tenor), with orchestra conducted by Ernst Hauke. 12" record (2 sides) No. D-29006; price \$1.05.

This is no longer a new recording. But it contains the unique voice of Richard Tauber in its golden prime, and singing the Léhar music for which he was so famous in what now seems almost an ancient day. The recording was good for its time. The surface of the record heard seemed a little above the DECCA average. We relist D-29006 because, for a time, we again have it in stock.

LIADOV (ANATOLY KONSTANTINOVICH)

LIADOV: Kikimora. Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. G-C3288; price \$2.10.

Besides his folksong settings, Liadov is principally remembered for three charming symphonic poems. *Baba Yaga*, *The Enchanted Lake*, and *Kikimora*. They are recognizably blood relations to *Scheherazade* and *Tamara* and *The Sirens*, but have a profile and complexion of

their own and a more delicate air than Rimsky or Balakirev or Gliere. They are in water color or pastel, and somewhat lack energy. But they have the charm of a brightly illustrated Russian fairy tale read in a dimly lighted room. They do not fade, but glow constantly in their subdued way. Sir Adrian Boult knows exactly how to conduct *Kikimora*, the men of the Hallé obeyed his directions admirably. The recording and surfaces are alike exemplary. A minor masterpiece presented in a manner entirely worthy of a major one.

LISZT (FRANZ)

LISZT: Scherzo on Les Patineurs from Meyerbeer's Le Prophète. Louis Kentner (piano). 12" imported record (2 sides) No. C-DX923; price \$2.10.

The third act of Meyerbeer's now unfortunately neglected operatic extravaganza, *Le Prophète*, contains an ice carnival ballet, the *Quadrille* of which has remained familiar as *Les Patineurs*. This innocuous rhythmic passage (its melody is almost too feeble to be called a melody) Liszt varied, tortured, and inflated into the *Scherzo* that Louis Kentner plays with astonishing sang froid on the present record. Every trick of prestidigitation and sleight of hand in the old sorcerer's hat was made to serve in the composition of what must, to all but a few virtuosos, look like a pianist's nightmare. The result is chemically pure trash of the most amusing sort. If it is to be enjoyed to the full, however, it must be played by a technical giant in dead earnest—the slightest touch of parody would make it unbearable. Mr. Kentner's is icy, perfect, and properly astonishing. That the entire performance has almost nothing to do with music should prevent nobody who can appreciate a period piece flawlessly reproduced from discovering C-DX923.

MILHAUD (DARIUS)

MILHAUD: Suite Provencale. St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set VM-951†; price complete with album \$2.62.

The bewildering multiplicity of Darius Milhaud is one of modern music's most confusing phenomena. He

seems to have been, and to be, several men each doing a number of unlike and unlikely things. To determine the common denominator that is Milhaud is all but impossible, unless it is a painstaking craftsmanship that is never less than exquisite. Of the members of the once notorious Six—Poulenc, Auric, Durey, Tailleferre, Honegger, and Milhaud—only the last named two seem likely to figure in the living repertoire for long, Honegger for the surpassing mastery with which he handles choral masses and Milhaud for the dexterity with which he manipulates the orchestra.

The *Suite Provençale* is delightful and unpretentious. It consists of eight brief movements, treatments mostly of eighteenth century folk airs. Milhaud was born in Aix-en-Provence, and in some of the themes chosen honors another native of that town, André Campra (1660-1744), a deft composer of ballet and opera. Occasionally the harmonic clothes Milhaud drapes on these melodies look old-fashioned in an unfortunate way. Then the effect is of something conventionally treated, but with a scattering of gentle wrong notes. But in the main the harmonizations are as apt and pleasing as the orchestration.

Mr. Golschmann and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra play the *Suite Provençale* brightly and with appropriate vigor, if without at any time sounding definitive. The recording is clear and full bodied.

MOZART (WOLFGANG AMADEUS)

MOZART: Sonata, A minor, K.310. Denis Matthews (piano). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. C-DX1114/5; price \$4.20.

Aware that he is inviting attack, this reviewer can only state it as his carefully pondered opinion that Denis Matthews' performance of the great Mozart A minor Sonata, K.130, is in every detail the finest yet put on records, and therefore superior to that by Artur Schnabel (G-DB3778/80). Doubters can hear the records. Mr. Matthews plays with superb address, never prettifying or sentimentalizing. His technique is apparently unlimited, and certainly at the service of a first-rate musical brain and imagination. This is one of the most beautiful or Mozart's works for piano alone, and as few of those works are adequately represented on records, this one is speedily welcomed with all heartiness. We shall hope to

have soon, from young Mr. Matthews, more Mozart as excellently played, recorded, and pressed as C-DX-1114/5.

MOZART: Sonata, D, K.576. Eileen Joyce (piano). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. C-DX1011/2; price \$4.20.

Two recordings of Mozart's magnificent Sonata in D major, K.576, are available on domestic surfaces—Arrau's (in VM-842†) and Casadesus' (in CM-433†). Both are admirable and both (the national adjective has no pejorative intent) are French in conception. For there can be little doubt that the composer whom the French call "Mozzar" is slightly other than the composer we call Mozart. The point is a very fine one, and can only be suggested by saying that "Mozzar" is an eighteenth-century composer who happens to be timeless, Mozart a timeless composer who lived in the eighteenth century. Be that as it may, Eileen Joyce's conception—one she is quite able to convey—differs from that of Arrau and that of Casadesus in matters of size and emotion, being both bigger and warmer. Her entirely cherishable playing has been exquisitely recorded and then pressed on surfaces manufactured to reveal, rather than veil, music.

MOZART: Symphony No. 34, C, K.338. London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Three 12" imported records (6 sides) Nos. C-LX920/2; price \$6.30.

The domestic COLUMBIA catalogue includes a Beecham recording of the Mozart Symphony No. 34, but it is an elderly one, with Sir Thomas conducting what was called the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra (CM-123†). Even that version easily distances the notoriously un-Mozartian version by Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony, included in VM-795†; what, then, of the later Beecham performance, with the London Philharmonic at the zenith of its perfections? It is the very distillate of Mozartian style, without waywardness, but with the singular freedom-in-regularity that Beecham almost alone knows how to instill. If Mozart had the traditional three periods, then this is either the master symphony of his second or the opening of his third. In any case, it is sheer delight, and has been performed and recorded with unqualified success. The English COLUMBIA surfaces complete the circle of gramophone magic, so that one is quite justified in saying that C-LX920/2 must be heard to be believed.

NICOLAI (CARL OTTO)

NICOLAI: *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor*—Witz, heit're Laune (Mistress Ford's Aria). Lotte Lehmann (soprano), with orchestra conducted by Manfred Gurlitt. 10" record (2sides) No. D-23025; price 79c.

Until the rotating wheel of fashion gets somewhat farther around, we are likely to hear of Nicolai's delightfully romantic and Italianate opera only its familiar overture. A Metropolitan Opera, nonetheless, which has just begun to redeem itself by means of a Beecham-conducted revival of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, could do worse than turn from Offenbach to the Nicolai of *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*. If measured against Verdi's *Falstaff*, this is no more Shakespearean than Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. But it contains a deal of delightful music, and considerable opportunity for bright vocal display. Of both, Mistress Ford's aria as sung by the Lotte Lehmann of some years ago is an excellent sample. In becoming the mistress she is today of vocal technique, Mme Lehmann has sacrificed some youthful agility, daring, and freshness. This record proves that. It was well recorded for its day, and not even DECCA surfaces of 1943 can dim it too much. Those who enjoy good light opera will certainly enjoy D-23025, which is once again in stock.

POULENC (FRANCIS)

POULENC: Trio for piano, oboe, and bassoon. Francis Poulenc (piano), M. Lamorlette (oboe), and G. Dherin (bassoon). Two 12" imported records (4 sides) Nos. C-L2223/4; price \$4.20.

We relist at this time, because we have been able to import a few sets from England, the unique recording of Poulenc's Trio for piano, oboe, and bassoon. Recorded when this witty and graceful ornament of the Six was at the height of his unstable fame, this excursion into chamber music now comes from the gramophone as a not unwelcome reminder of a gayer and more frivolous day. It is witty, it is carefully fashioned. The performance had the important advantage of the composer's own fine pianism. The recording, by no means of today's volume or verisimilitude, is nonetheless adequate. Minor this is, but real and by no means without musical value.

WAGNER (RICHARD)

WAGNER: *Tannhäuser*—Blick' ich umher, Act II, Scene 4, & O du mein holder Abendstern, Act III, Scene 2. Gerhard Hüsch (baritone) and Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Hanns Udo Müller. 12" imported record (2 sides) No. G-DB4049; price \$2.62.

It is always easier, despite the many reasons for practice on both sides, to find new ways of damning the bad and the third rate than it is to praise once more such great artistry as that of Gerhard Hüsch. It is beyond the capabilities of anyone save a singer who might be able to do the singing to think of any way in which Hüsch's projection of the two baritone showpieces from *Tannhäuser* could be bettered. The natural beauty of voice, of course, is all but unique. But what matters most is the creative, character-building way in which that voice is used. Just so might Wolfram, and nobody but Wolfram, sing exactly the text and melodies Wagner imagined for him. Orchestral support, recording, and HMV surfaces combine to produce one of the best of all single Wagnerian records. As with all importations from England, the supply of this one is severely limited.

* * *

COLLECTIONS

EARLY AMERICAN BALLADS. John and Lucy Allison, with choral accompaniment. Three 10" records (6 sides) in Set K-102; price complete with album \$2.89.

The ballads sung in this set are: *Patriotic Diggers*, *The Greenland Fishery*, *Ballad of Saratoga*, *Peter Parker's Song*, *Unfortunate Miss Baily*, *Escape of Old John Webb*, *Nantucket Lullaby*, and *Ballad of the Tea Party*. Accompanying themselves and their five choral associates on guitars and accordion, the renowned Allisons have tried successfully to create the impression that they are singing the ballads as they might have been sung in their youth. An excellent accompanying booklet gives the texts as sung. The recordings are clear, the surfaces better than adequate. Altogether, K-102 is a distinguished addition to the recorded store of traditional American ballads, and will appeal to admirers of Andrew Rowan Summers, John Jacob Niles, and Richard Dyer-Bennet.

METROPOLITAN REVIVALS. Enrico Caruso and All-Star Casts. Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set VM-953; price complete with album \$10.50.

There can be no doubt that VICTOR, by issuing this remarkable set of operatic ensemble recordings that include Caruso, has served the record-buying public thoughtfully and well. May VM-953 meet with such success that many other great recordings of the past will be reissued, for here is one of the functions the gramophone performs uniquely.

The contents and performers are as follows:

Side 1. Lucia di Lammermoor: Chi mi frena (sex-tet), Act III. Caruso, Tetrizzini, Amato, Journet, Jacoby, Bada, orchestra.

Side 2. Un Ballo in Maschera: E scherzo, od e follia (quintet), Act 1. Caruso, Hempel, Duchêne, Rothier, De Seguro, Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra.

Side 3. Rigoletto: Bella figlia dell' amore (quartet), Act III. Caruso, Sembrich, Scotti, Severina, orchestra.

Side 4. La Bohème: Addio, dolce svegliare (quartet), Act III. Caruso, Farrar, Scotti, Viafora, orchestra.

Side 5. Martha: Dormi pur (quartet), Act II. Caruso, Alda, Journet, Jacoby, orchestra.

Side 6. I Lombardi: Qual volutta trascorrere (trio), Act III. Caruso, Alda, Journet, orchestra.

Side 7. Faust: Alerte! ou vous etes perdus! (trio), Act V. Caruso, Farrar, Journet, orchestra.

Side 8. Samson et Dalila: Je viens celebrer la victoire (trio), Act I. Caruso, Homer, Journet, orchestra.

As in all pre-electric recordings, the voices survive here better than the orchestral accompaniments. Insofar as it is possible to judge singers by their recorded voices, these voices from the past condemn all but a very small handful of the Metropolitan's present-day roster. Not only have we no Caruso—we have no Hempel, Farrar, Tetrizzini, or Amato. Of the luminous names here recorded, Sembrich comes off least well, as is true of her recordings in general.

Of course these recordings sound thin beside the recordings of today. It is difficult indeed to understand the enthusiasts—especially prevalent in England—who argue the superiority of acoustic over electric recording. But in this set that is beside the point. The point is that here we have superb ensembles of great singers whose voices are no longer to be heard. They come to us as the past must always come, a little faded, not as real as today. But they come, as any part of a glamorous past always comes, to a happy welcome. Let us have more *Metropolitan* (and orchestral and pianistic) *Revivals*—and soon.

* * *

COLLECTIONS

PSALMS WE SING. B.B.C. Singers, introduced by Dr. J. W. Welch and conducted by Leslie Woodgate. Two 10" imported records (available separately) (each 2 sides) Nos. G-B9300 and G-B9303; price each \$1.57, or \$3.14 the pair.

The contents of these two excellent records are as follows:

G-B9300—Psalm XIX (The Heavens declare the Glory of God) as set by Hopkins and Sir Walford Davies and **Psalm XC (Lord, thou hast been our refuge)** as set by Hopkins.

G-B9303 Psalm LI (Have mercy upon me O God) as set by Turle, **Psalm CXXXIV (O how amiable are Thy dwellings)** as set by Parratt, and **Psalm LXVII (God be merciful unto us)** as set by one of the Wesleys.

In the October, 1943, SUPPLEMENT (page 4), we reviewed another record in this series. We can praise the present records in no better way than by paraphrasing that review herewith. The simple beauty of these records is breath-taking. The unaccompanied choral singing is superbly modulated, entirely accurate, and thoroughly musical. Too much praise for the clarity of diction and pronunciation would be impossible. The devotional music of the Church of England is always poorly represented on records. Here are prime examples of some of that music so set forth as to be of musical interest to communicants and non-communicants alike. The record-

ing is quite worthy of the matter and performance. The surfaces do not fall behind the renowned HMV standard. All who enjoy unaccompanied choral singing, or like to hear the English language in its best hours, should be certain to obtain G-B9300 and G-B9303.

THE NEW COLUMBIA CATALOGUE

Following the format and style of its 1943 catalogue, COLUMBIA has issued an improved and corrected version for 1944. Here we can only repeat—with necessary emendations—what we said of that earlier version in the January, 1943, issue of this SUPPLEMENT: "Here is a record catalogue that for ease of reference, clarity, and general handiness may serve as a model.

Records are listed under the following headings:

1. title
2. title of large work (as opera, oratorio) from which a selection is taken
3. name of the composer
4. name of the recording artist or artists
5. such groupings as concertos, overtures, quartet, sonatas, symphonies, and trios
6. special listings as (to take a few of many) ballet music, choral music, folk music, lieder, marches, sound effects records, waltzes
7. special types of album sets, as children's, Columbia History of Music, educational, masterworks, and popular.

There is a special section, on yellow paper, devoted to listing serious music under the names of recording artists. Brief biographical notes add to the interest of this section. Here it is heartening to find almost three pages devoted to Sir Thomas Becham, eleven complete works by the Budapest Quartet, a page full of Giesecking, almost two pages of Lotte Lehmann, and a page or so each for Szigeti, Bruno Walter, and Felix Weingartner. COLUMBIA has reason to be proud of its repertoire

and of the way that repertoire is displayed and advertised by its useful and decorative 1944 catalogue."

THE NEW VICTOR CATALOGUE

The last previous VICTOR catalogue measured 5" by 7¼", and contained 632 pages—and covered, therefore, roughly 17½ square yards of paper. The new VICTOR catalogue, a serious paper shortage having intervened, not to mention a transportation shortage, measures 8½" by 11½", and contains 520 pages, or roughly a little more than 39 square yards of paper—much more than twice as much printing space as the previous one. This despite the drastic cuts VICTOR has made in its lists. Almost everyone who has looked at it, outside and in, has truthfully said that it appears to be a Sears, Roebuck catalogue. For the eminently sane and useful arrangement that has made the VICTOR catalogue a handy manual for many years, it substitutes a complication that might have been designed by a frustrated librarian suddenly set free. For clear readability it substitutes complex and confusing typography and a plethora of poorly reproduced photographs of the outside of VICTOR record albums. It is, in short, a tremendous piece of advertising rather than a carefully designed catalogue. Only because it is the sole approximately current listing of VICTOR records can it be recommended at all. Every record-collector will pray for VICTOR's immediate return to the catalogue format of yesterday, and will use the new catalogue, while he must, with a constant sense of wonderment and irritation.

THE NEW WALCO TRU-TRAC FLOATING JEWEL NEEDLE

For the WALCO TRU-TRAC FLOATING JEWEL NEEDLE, its manufacturer makes the following claims: 1. that it banishes needle chatter, or noise at the record; 2. that it banishes hiss from the loudspeaker; 3. that it eliminates serious distortion; 4. that it enhances brilliance and realism, and 5. that it greatly reduces record wear. Its slogan is "Up to 10,000 plays." The needle sells for \$2.50.

SECOND REVIEWS

VERDI (GIUSEPPE)

VERDI: Requiem Mass. Maria Caniglia (soprano), Ebe Stignani (mezzo-soprano), Beniamino Gigli (tenor), Ezio Pinza (bass), with Chorus & Orchestra of the Royal Opera (Rome) conducted by Tullio Serafin. Ten 12" records (20 sides) in Set VDM-734 (only automatic sets available at present); price complete with album \$11.02.

Two hoary but persistent misconceptions must be completely out of the way before we can enjoy the great *Missa da Requiem* that Verdi, in 1873-4, composed to honor the memory of Alessandro Manzoni. One of them is the appalling canard—for which Teutonic critics, and the hyper-Wagnerians in particular, were largely responsible—that Verdi was a vulgar tunesmith, a superior arranger of carnivals for brainless singers. The other is the perhaps peculiarly Anglo-American notion that religious music, if it be serious, must sound like Handel or Bach. Music-lovers, music critics, and musicologists have been joining forces during the last few decades to say that Verdi was a very great musician, a composer whose inferiority to Wagner, if it ever existed, has become exceedingly difficult to detect. Likewise, an appreciation of the essentially Catholic and Italianate Masses of Mozart and Haydn has begun to dissolve our insistence that religious music be solemn, and to show us that here, as in the making of tribal lays, a variety of ways is "right."

Of course the "Manzoni" *Requiem* is "operatic" in style: it is in Verdi's style, and he was a great operatic composer. He was devout, he mourned the loss of a renowned Italian writer, and he composed out of sincerity and a great musical mind. We are fortunate indeed to have of this lofty creation a recording that does it justice. Four truly accomplished singers are required, and here—in Caniglia, Stignani, and Pinza—three of them are. Only Gigli did not completely understand the manner required for singing the Latin text of the *Requiem*, and neglected to leave his renowned sob outside the hall. A sure-handed and imaginative conductor is required, and

here is Tullio Serafin to fill the bill. Here are a far better than adequate chorus and orchestra. Here is amazingly good recording of such large and diverse forces.

Listen, if you want to hear Verdi near his best, to the beautiful singing, by Stignani and Caniglia, of the *Agnus Dei*, at first without accompaniment, and then with the intertwining flutes that have figured in many an orchestration textbook. Or listen to Pinza's wonderfully dignified setting forth of the *Confutatis maledictis*. Put VDM-734 on your gramophone entire, in fact, and enjoy a musical pleasure of a unique and intense sort. There is, perhaps no comparably well achieved recording of any other major religious composition.

BOOKS

MUSIC ON MY BEAT. Howard Taubman. 267 pages. Simon & Schuster, New York, 1943. \$2.50.

Howard Taubman, music editor of *The New York Times*, is unique on the American musical scene. In addition to editing the memoirs of Giulio Gatti-Casazza, he has now published three books on musical subjects—all of them interesting from several points of view—not one of which is historical, biographical or, in any true sense, critical. He is not, in fact, a music critic, but a music chronicler. He retails the shop talk of music in a civilized manner. He talks about musicians, audiences, radio, recordings, music for children, press agents, anecdotes, and persiflage. *Opera, Front and Back* and *Music as a Profession*, his two earlier books, are now joined by this third—which shows no letup in his zest for minutiae and oddities. It is as good light reading as any concert-frequenter, radio listener, or miscellaneous music-lover is likely to encounter this year or next. There is not a creatively critical word in it, but it is clearly the very amusing conversation of an interesting man who knows his way about the musical world. And let us congratulate him on having a title that perfectly describes the contents of his book and indicates the tone of his writing.

THE RECORD BOOK: COMPLETE EDITION.

David Hall. 1063 pages. Smith & Durrell, New York, 1943. \$4.95.

Four reference books are basic in the library of a serious record collector: *The Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia of Recorded Music*, David Hall's *The Record Book*, Irving Kolodin's *A Guide to Recorded Music*, and B. H. Haggin's *Music on Records*. The *Encyclopedia* is unique in its scope and inclusiveness—it is the only one of the four books that lists foreign as well as American pressings—and is therefore not competitive to the other three books. It carries no comment on the recordings it lists except where more than one version of a given work was available at the time of its compilation, in which case it lists the versions in order of merit as judged by its compiler.

David Hall's *The Record Book* first appeared in 1940. Then, in 1941, a slim supplementary volume was issued. Then appeared the book itself with the supplement bound in. Then, in 1943, appeared a second slim supplementary volume. Now, in this "Complete Edition," we have (1.) the original 1940 book of 750 pages, (2.) the 1941 supplement of 114 pages, (3.) the 1943 supplement of 127 pages, (4.) an additional group of criticisms of 18 pages of recordings issued between January 1 and August 1, 1943, (5.) 31 pages of comprehensive index of all the criticisms in the preceding 1010 pages by composer, and (6.) a 20-page index of the same matter by artists. It is a notable bargain at \$4.95.

To David Hall's large following, no more need be said. Those who are considering the choice of their first record guide in addition to *The Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia*, however, may want some help in choosing Hall or Kolodin or Haggin. Here we are on exceedingly personal ground. Service in the armed forces prevents Irving Kolodin from revising *A Guide to Recorded Music*, now more than two years old. His book is by long odds the easiest of the three to use, being designed on a simple alphabetical-cum-type-of-music plan. He says little about

the music as such, but is direct and honest in his evaluation of recording quality. His complex symbols—one set for quality of reproduction, another for quality of interpretation, and a third for relative justness of price—are unduly inflexible.

B. H. Haggin is a man of violently held, relentlessly pressed, and carefully thought out opinions. He assumes more musical sophistication on the part of his readers than either Kolodin or Hall, and makes no compromise whatever with his own exceedingly lofty standards of judgment. This reviewer has again and again found himself taking issue with Haggin on things Haggin has condemned unmercifully and without hesitation—but almost never on things Haggin has praised. His book is likely to make many readers exceedingly angry, but it will make them think. It is more concerned with the music as such, with aesthetic qualities, and with fine points than any other publication of its sort. Haggin writes beautifully, and can be read for the mere pleasure of reading—which cannot be said of either Kolodin or Hall. His book was revised in 1943.

Which brings us back to David Hall's now mammoth book. And Hall is the average music-lover in *excellis*. He has no heretical opinions and few original ones. He is gentle, kind, and unimaginative. He writes smoothly, but without distinction. His opinions are those of a very large majority of music-lovers and record-buyers. Therefore his book has always outsold those of his competitors (has, in fact, sold as many as theirs added together, in all probability). He is scrupulous, and he is useful.

It comes down to as simple a proposition as this: once you have the *Encyclopedia*, get Haggin, Hall, and Kolodin if you can. If you do not wish to invest so much in books, choose Hall or Kolodin if you want peace and relaxation, Haggin if you're spoiling for a fight and have a taste for mental adventure. The world of recordings is fortunate in having a basic library of four such useful books.

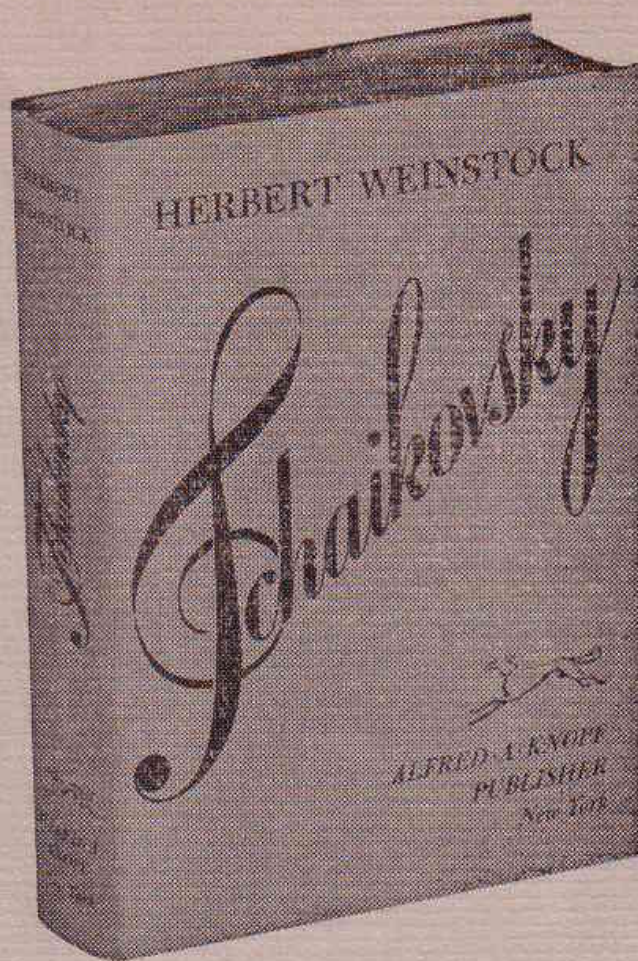
POPULAR

OKLAHOMA: Selections, Members of the Original New York Production. Six 10" records (12 sides) in Set D-359†; price complete with album \$5.25.

Whoever the stars of the show may be, the stars of this album set are, first of all, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, and Celeste Holm, and then Alfred Drake and Lee Dixon. It may be that the chief value of these records for those who have seen *Oklahoma* will be an ability to summon up at will some of their most pleasant theatrical memories. For those who have not seen this biggest smash hit of many a New York season, they are not only an urgent invitation to make up for that omission, but more than sufficient entertainment in themselves. They reveal, too, the secret of this Theatre Guild success: here is a truly homespun America operetta-musical of the sort no one has been able to duplicate since Jerome Kern composed *Show Boat*. There can be little doubt that—though *Oklahoma* contains no *Ol' Man River*—the hit songs are Americana, and here to remain.

Mr. Hammerstein has written superior lyrics, and Mr. Rodgers has known how to set them to singable, danceable tunes. Celeste Holm, in *All er Nothin'* and *I Caint Say No* shows herself one of Broadway's premier comic stylists, and Lee Dixon and Alfred Drake (the latter as good straight as comic) are very little behind her. Only Joan Roberts does not, on the records, come up to the general high standard, which is regrettable in view of the fact that she sings *People Will Say We're in Love*. She is a conventional musical comedy soprano; the others are characters singing.

DECCA is to be thanked for making possible records from *Oklahoma*. But DECCA would be in a position to be thanked longer and more profoundly if only it made better records. These are well enough recorded, but are pressed on unspeakable surfaces that, with use, pass quickly from the unspeakable to the inaudible. American standards are consistently low in this department, but cannot DECCA do at least as well as COLUMBIA and VICTOR?



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